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NSC BRIEFING

5 February 1958

NORTH AFRICA
(Liny)

I. Spain may initiate at any time a major military offensive against irregular Moroccan Army of Liberation (AOL) concentrations in Spanish West African territories (Spanish Sahara, Spanish Southern Morocco and Ifni). France will probably lend some tangible support but precise extent of French participation unclear.

A. Irregulars--nationalist extremists from Morocco and dissident local tribesmen--succeeded during November-December offensive in forcing Spanish withdrawal to five coastal defense perimeters.

II. Numerous reports of a pending "joint offensive" received from 25X1X6 25X1X6 [REDACTED] since 9 January when Spain's [REDACTED]

25X1X6 [REDACTED] such an operation would be carried out in early February.

A. Apparently the Spaniards plan to move against all rebels concentrations in the area.

1. Full authority to initiate joint action said to rest now with French and Spanish commanding generals in West Africa who are in direct communication.

B. Although French concerned about AOL incursions over the border and fearful consequences complete disappearance Spanish power from area, France's participation likely to be limited.

1. France anxious keep friction along Moroccan-Algerian border to minimum and avoid arousing Moroccans whom many French officials apparently still hope to use as channel to Algerian rebels.

2. Any direct action by French accordingly likely to be restricted to stepped-up patrol activities on the border and to limited "hot pursuit" forays into Spanish Sahara.

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2. French cabinet reported divided on question several weeks ago.
3. Paris has apparently already made available to Spanish navy one LST and one LSD. Some light armored scout cars have also been furnished. Additional material and intelligence support will probably also be available to Spain.

III. Spain has been building up its military position in Canaries and West African mainland in recent weeks.

- A. Spanish now have estimated 7,000 men in Ifni and about ^{8,000}~~5,000~~ more troops dispersed among the four strong points in the Spanish protectorate and Spanish Sahara. Forty military planes (15-20 year old German types) and five helicopters (H-19) give Spain's unchallenged air control and may soon be augmented by about a dozen ancient vintage fighters.
- B. Much, if not most, of Spain's operational naval fleet is also deployed in West African waters.

IV. French strength in Mauritania is estimated at 4,000 to 5,000 men. At least 2,000 to 3,000 additional troops available in extreme western triangle of Algeria. Actual figure may be considerably higher as result of recent transfers from Morocco where 40,000 French army personnel remain on duty.

V. Rebels have approximately 7,000 armed guerrillas in entire Ifni-Spanish Sahara area.

- A. Extreme mobility of guerrillas and their ability to lose identity among local tribesmen and to melt across Moroccan frontiers, makes ultimate success of any operation against

VI. Meanwhile, on other side of Algeria, situation along Tunisian frontier continues to have explosive potentialities.

A. French frustration--civilian in Paris as well as military in Algeria--growing over Algerian rebel concentrations and bases French believe are located across border on Tunisian territory.

1. French reports of size these concentrations believed exaggerated. [REDACTED] 25X1X6

25X1X [REDACTED] in Tunis saw no evidence of such in recent visits to northwest frontier region.

2. Nevertheless, reports reaching French of rebel build-up for a spring guerrilla offensive is fostering sentiment for early action to deny rebels their sanctuary in Tunisia.

B. Premier Gaillard not likely to sanction any major punitive offensive at this time but new incidents--which can be expected at any time--could force his hand, and create new crises which might induce Tunisian President Bourguiba to appeal to UN, and directly to US for assistance.